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HOUSE PLANTS AS CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS

If holly and mistletoe or other traditional Christmas greens are not available, why not use house plants as decorations? Attractive centerpieces include such plants as poinsettias, Saintpaulias, kalanchoes, cyclamen, primroses, azaleas, begonias, gloxinia, dracaenas, and sansevieria.

Poinsettias, of course, head the list of Christmas plants. A poinsettia gets cold feet if the temperature goes much below 70° F., so it is advisable to keep the plant warm and protect it from cold air.

Saintpaulias, better known as "African violets," have been grown in this country since 1893, but they became popular only about 5 years ago. The improved varieties will bloom continuously. The plants, originally from Africa, also dislike cold drafts, and they prefer a temperature of about 65°. Water the plants just enough to keep the earth moist, and do not sprinkle water directly on the leaves.

The kalanchoe, with its coral-colored blossoms, is one of the prettiest of the new plants for use as a centerpiece, and it will keep right on producing flowers far into the new year.

The cyclamen, with glossy leaves and flowers of white or rose color, is another of the house plants that will stay in bloom for a long time. Then there is the primrose, one of the old favorites. However, one variety of primrose, the Obonica, is mildly poisonous to certain people. To be on the safe side, one may select a Chinese primrose which does not have an unfortunate effect on sensitive skin.

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